

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Law Enforcement Agencies Stepping Up Enforcement to Promote Safe Family Travel

INDIANAPOLIS, IN. – Indiana Criminal Justice Institute’s (ICJI) Executive Director, Mike Cunegin today announced that over 250 law enforcement agencies funded by grants through ICJI will step up seat belt saturation patrols, impaired driving patrols, and speed enforcement for the next two weeks. This increased enforcement is being conducted in an effort to prevent senseless tragedies from occurring on Indiana’s roadways this Thanksgiving holiday season.

“Thanksgiving is one of the busiest times of the year on Hoosier roadways, where families travel long distances to visit their loved ones. Indiana law enforcement officers are committed to making sure that these families reach their destinations safely,” said Cunegin.

The *Safe Family Travel* statewide crackdown went into effect on Sunday, November 11, and will conclude Sunday, November 24 – two days after the Thanksgiving holiday. This two-week enforcement initiative is supported by a paid national and statewide radio and television advertising campaign that also went into effect November 11.

Last year in Indiana, 136 people were killed in traffic crashes over the holiday season; from November 12, 2006 through January 8, 2007. Of those fatalities, 52 were unrestrained at the time of the crash (38.2%) while 35 were alcohol-related (25.7%). Of those killed in the alcohol-related crashes, nearly 50 percent were reported as unrestrained. Research from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has proven that wearing a seat belt is the single most important thing anyone can do to survive a crash and reduce serious injury.

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The risk of a fatal crash increases in the evening and overnight hours because drivers fail to buckle their safety belts. According to NHTSA, 347 fatalities occurred nationwide during the nighttime hours of the 2005 Thanksgiving holiday season. Of those fatally injured, 59 percent (205) were not buckled up in comparison to 42 percent (159) killed in daytime crashes who were not buckled up.

“We must overcome the senseless losses we experienced in 2006 by taking an aggressive approach to increasing seat belt use and reducing impaired driving, and speeding related crashes and fatalities during this enforcement campaign,” said Ryan Klitzsch, Traffic Safety division director at ICJI.

“We certainly hope that all Hoosiers will help us achieve our goal with this enforcement campaign. The goal is not to write tickets, but to save countless lives by deterring impaired and dangerous driving behaviors through high-visibility enforcement. Remember, drinking and driving will result in arrest and jail time. Furthermore, failure to buckle up in all seating positions at all times and/or to properly restrain minors under the age of 16 will result in a ticket,” Cunegin concluded.

The Governor's Council on Impaired & Dangerous Driving serves as the public opinion catalyst and the implementing body for statewide action to reduce death and injury on Indiana roadways. The Council provides grant funding, training, coordination and ongoing support to state and local traffic safety advocates.

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